

*M. L. C.*

*by Screech*

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Assistant Librarians**

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# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(*Section of the Library Association*)

ON. EDITOR W. B. STEVENSON

Hornsey Public Libraries

## Announcements

THE gifts of cigarettes sent by the Association to librarians who are prisoners of war are arriving safely. Acknowledgments have been received from A. C. Angel, H. H. Goom, and George Evans (in Germany) and Arnold Diamond (Italy).

An American library is endeavouring to obtain Volume 15, No. 9, of *The Library Assistant* for October, 1920. Will any assistant who is willing to dispose of a copy of this issue please notify Mrs. Martin, Hon. Education Secretary.

## Acade : An Excursion

Lewis Halsey

"And these we invent and propose unto acuter enquirers, nauseating crambe erities and questions over-queried."—Sir Thomas Browne, *Garden of Cyrus*.

THE bibliothecal heresy is widespread : to many people a library is primarily a building which houses books. In the writer's opinion, a bibliographical approach is the only one tolerable to a serious practitioner of the book arts. From this point of view a library is an organised collection of books, and this will be the governing factor in considering how to administer the library. How and with what magnificence the books shall be housed is a secondary matter, though only fractionally less important than their actual selection and organisation. But in a conflict of interests—books versus bricks—books must have it every time. There should, in fact, be a just balance between the two, remembering that in this instance books weigh more than bricks, and that a poor collection lavishly housed is likely to be very much less effective than an expertly organised library with however poor an exterior.

Bibliography and architecture apart, "atmosphere" has an enormous bearing on the success or failure of a library. It is intangible and indefinable, and therefore extremely difficult to write about sensibly : perhaps this explains why it has been hitherto the province of the belles-lettres rather than the library scientist. Certainly it is hardly a topic in which instruction could be given, nor does the writer feel that the following brief reflections will do more perhaps than ventilate the subject.

An intimate cross-counter relationship of a peculiar kind is integral to the successful practice of the book arts. It is compounded of learning, love of books, pipe-smoke, personality, cynical toleration, awareness of environment, and an Autolycan attitude

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of mind. It will not mix with "big business," bureaucracy (if more than mild), snobbery, or any other major foolishness of civilised communities. The attempt so to make it may account for the rather astringent, bloodless atmosphere noticeable in large departmental bookshops and in those libraries in our large cities whose architectural splendours overshadow and detract from excellent collections of books.

In the unlikely event of the writer being called upon to state a policy for librarianship, one of his chief ends would be the fostering of this intimacy of contact with readers. Thus he would prefer no public department to be of more than medium size : more and smaller libraries with speedier and more effective co-operation between them would be the aim. The obstacles presented to would-be borrowers are many, and not all can be called unnecessary ; but what are we to say about what is often the first and greatest obstacle of all—the building itself ? Civic pride and the natural desire of the librarian to "do himself proud" while he can are jointly responsible for the remarkable (and in large cities often mountainous) structures which house our civic collections.

Being ignorant of architectural technique, the writer is likely to become a mere echo of the redoubtable Mr. Bryon, who has been so eloquent on the subject in good numbers. Still, he may be permitted to outline his view of the influence architecture and style has on the "atmosphere" of a library. The writer would not, for instance, care to see functionalism dogmatically applied ; and were the chaste lines of the lamented Viipuri library to be widely imitated, he fears the resultant atmosphere might be altogether too rarefied for housing a living collection of books. Simplicity will of course be necessary for future building, if post-war economics may be thus far predicted. Good taste will then, as always, be desired. But the real requirement of library architecture will be a combination of simplicity and good taste that is at the same time warm and living housing for both books and people. Too much stress will not be laid on architectural finesse for its own sake, lest the building develop into an architectural museum-piece merely. This digression into the future is not part of the writer's theme, but may serve to point a conclusion or so on this question of atmosphere as affected by architecture. While obviously the style of a building will affect its interior physically—it will be light or dark, airy or cloistral according to the number of windows and the dimensions and disposition of the various rooms and passages—style (less obviously) seems to have little enough influence on the psychological atmosphere of a building's interior. This is possibly the reason why a certain fifty-year-old library with a Carnegie exterior, lightless, airless and overcrowded, is to the writer the most atmospheric he has ever known ; while conversely he can quote several modern libraries, spacious and generously conceived buildings, not stridently modernistic in style, which seem hollow and lifeless inside, and where a man, trapped for a moment into cordiality and good talk, checks himself and looks guiltily round like one caught dancing in a morgue. But architecture, if it is too formidable, has an important effect on many would-be borrowers, the very important effect of preventing them from coming into the library at all. "Formidable" buildings the writer conceives to be either, as explained above, so chaste as to be completely uninviting ; or so imposing and overbearing (think of the Central Libraries of some of our big cities) as to tend to scare away many potential readers. This is the justification of our title : for only the most persistent reader will enter a library against the hostility of a frowning façade. A public library may be dignified, but must not be aloof ; nor must it be imposing ; and its way in must be made inviting. This is entirely an architect's problem, and it has been stated before. Some further considerations of atmosphere may not, however, be without interest.

Of other conditions relating to the psychological atmosphere of a library, three disengage themselves as being most important. The quality of the book stock, the quality of the staff and the quality of the readers using the library are obvious factors,

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and closely inter-related. The second consideration is perhaps most important of all, for with librarians of a certain kind even the smallest number of books come to life. Of this kind of librarian the writer has treated before in considering the "librarian-artist": and perhaps the definition of a model librarian arrived at in a previous contribution may be recalled. He will be "cultured, in tune with modern life, a cavalier as to petty details, a puritan as to sloppiness in design, book selection, typography, and so on; and above everything . . . imaginative."<sup>1</sup> Living librarianship, in other words, is not so much a matter of training as an attitude of mind. Wide and varied general knowledge, limitless enthusiasm and a ceaseless interest in people and ideas (with perhaps a cynical tolerance of opinion) mark the state of mind most favourable to "atmosphere"; as, on the other hand, narrowness, snobbery, and that kind of officiousness and inflated sense of self-importance into which municipal officers tend to slip, and in which regulations and forms tend to become the *summum bonum* and the bony structure of the universe—these things are most inimical to "atmosphere" and must on any account be avoided by the librarian.

Let us consider one more factor: the book stock, since this will in part govern the quality of our readers. In the writer's youth he was strongly in favour of stocking a library only with the very best of books; maturer thought on the subject has convinced him that a public library should neither simply lead nor simply follow public taste, but should in some sort do both at the same time. For in the first case, a policy of merely leading public taste would result in losing most of one's borrowers; while in the second, merely to follow public taste would be to collect together a vile body of vulgar literature unworthy to be called a library. The very best literature is such a small proportion of the whole that any library can afford to represent it very fully indeed.

These diversities of opinion are proffered without prejudice as material for discussion and, perhaps, for fuller treatment by some other enquirer. Without prejudice? But is not this talk of "more and smaller" libraries prompted by the writer's evident bias in favour of the smaller library? Perhaps it is. The part a library's exterior may play in attracting or repelling readers will not, however, be denied. Nor is it prejudice to assert that a really successful and vital library possesses a certain psychological element which has here been named "atmosphere": for this is common knowledge to most librarians. To imply further, as has been implied above, that this element is important, and may be consciously created, is to venture into more debatable ground; so also the brief enquiry into the nature of "atmosphere."

The conclusion is a familiar one, though still debatable: the establishment of a correct relationship with our public is a condition of progress in librarianship, and is itself conditioned by the presence or absence in our libraries of the right "atmosphere"; and this depends ultimately upon the state of mind of the individual library worker. Librarianship, in fact, depends so much on individuals that care must be taken not to over-plan. It is one more facet of life which should not be collectivised. Amidst the orgy of organisation which is almost certain to follow the war, complete freedom must be demanded for learning and the arts, and for their satellites, the publishing houses, the Press and the libraries. By all means let us McColvinise into neat units if we must; the freedom we demand is freedom from external control. No State interference, however well-intentioned, must be tolerated in the free inter-traffic of books and ideas. "There is no greater robber in the world than he who robs us of our liberty of thought," says Lin Yutang, in that wise, crazy and stimulating book *The importance of living*. "Deprived of that, we might as well go down on all fours, call the whole biped experiment of walking on two legs a mistake, and revert to our earlier posture of at least some 30,000 years ago."

<sup>1</sup> "Sad standards," *The Library Assistant*, October, 1940.

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### The Librarian in Disguise

Leonard W. Due

M R. McCOLVIN, faced with the task of reporting on the staffing of libraries, confines himself to questions of numbers and salary scales. The position he outlines is far from reassuring—we have, in his own words, no alternative but to regard it as grave—yet the picture would have appeared much darker if he had attempted a qualitative evaluation of the human material concerned. Probably, this kind of thing was considered too evasive for a report, and certainly it could not be backed by an array of statistics. That Mr. McColvin is alive to the position himself is, of course, assumed, and later he makes a point of that distinction between professional and non-professional grades which is so obvious in theory and yet unrecognised in practice.

Owing to the exigencies of war, I have during the past three years moved over a considerable portion of this land, and have observed in a haphazard way the conditions which obtain in some of our libraries. These include small county branches, country towns, a seat of learning, a fair-sized manufacturing town, a London Borough, and a large seaport. Size, book stock, buildings and organisation of course varied enormously, but there was one factor which remained rather depressingly the same. This was the façade which was presented to the public by the staff—or that portion of the staff which was sufficiently ill-paid to have nothing more important to do than deal with the public. I am naturally making allowances for the depletion of staffs by wartime conditions—have allowed, in effect, a margin for improvement in more normal times. Even so the reversal of function—finding oneself as a seeker and not as a guide—has been, to put it mildly, enlightening.

The boys and girls who have been brought in—often at the age of fourteen—to do counter work owing to shortage of staff may be dismissed at once as not vital to the issue. One only hopes that arguing over the (alleged) wrong calculation of fines will not embitter them for life.

When we consider the senior assistants, no such allowance need be made. Here are former colleagues, viewed from the other side of the counter. They have, one notices, learnt to be more patient and polite than their juniors, and they recognise the needs of the regular borrower. (I am dealing principally with lending libraries.) The taste of each regular user has been gauged and docketed: a love story for Mrs. A., a thriller for Mr. B., while the new political volume will admirably suit that intellectual Mr. C.

Here, however, is a new borrower. (It is myself, disguised as a member of the public.) We press down the treadle, and in he walks, free to choose any book he pleases. For a moment he feels lost, bewildered by the endless array of books, a mighty reservoir indeed! True, he can't just spot anything suitable at the moment... and here, of course, early training asserts itself and inevitably I cease to become a "new" reader. I know how the books are arranged, complicated decimals greet me as old friends, the catalogue is available for my inspection, and anything not in stock can be obtained. But that first entry as an average, unskilled borrower lingers with me. I realise how lost, literally and metaphorically, the new user feels. What is his obvious reaction? He finds, by a process of trial and error, where the most easily read books lie, and ever afterwards makes a bee-line for those shelves. His feet wear a channel in the floor, and the books make a rut in his mind. Sometimes, perhaps, he desires to ask a question, but the question is only half formulated, and the assistant is busy talking to another assistant (what do they talk about all day?) and the moment passes.

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You will think that I am blaming the assistant for all this. Not so. The assistant, the librarian for that matter, honestly does his best—her best, nowadays—to cope with the situation, but is hampered, partly by lack of training and partly because it is not sufficiently realised that the situation exists. It is only natural that when anyone enters the library profession, he assumes that everything is ordered for the best, just as a child accepts the world, at first, as he finds it. But whereas children grow up and begin asking awkward questions, library assistants only too often remain immature. Little is said in the prescribed text-books about ideally run libraries, but usually this is only a veneer applied to a mind thoroughly used to the old ways.

For this I blame the present system of training. How easily the words "system of examinations" rise to the surface of the mind when we think about professional education! What a very apt phrase it is! Yet we use it every day, not stopping to ponder on its damning significance. We cram our young assistants with an ill-assorted mass of facts about library law, the Tree of Porphyry and peptonised histories of English literature, and expect them to be equipped, after taking their examinations, to deal intelligently with readers many and various. Why? By what chain of reasoning should we suppose that such swotting will make an educated—that is, an efficient—library assistant?

I have omitted to mention the sciences of cataloguing and classification, for there are obviously spheres of technical knowledge which must form part of any librarian's equipment. Nor am I suggesting that any of the subjects set are useless in themselves—but that they are given an undue importance.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in his instructive little book *On the art of reading*, points out that the mass of knowledge to-day is quite indigestible, and that a selection must be made. It is my contention, firstly, that the duty of the library assistant is to help the reader in making this selection, and secondly, that he is at present not trained for this most important work. We piously hope that he will equip himself, by the development of his own personality, for his job, being aided in this by the devotion to most of his spare time to cramming for examinations.

The fallacy that a library may be judged successful according to the number of books issued dies hard, if indeed it dies at all. It is regrettable that the more progressive are the system, the more this heresy rears its ugly head: and it is ugly, in my opinion, having close associations with vulgarity and pretentiousness. Who would not consider it vulgar to see a man stuffing himself with food, for the mere sake of eating, until he could contain no more? Yet mental indigestion from assimilating books in such a haphazard manner is common enough.

Selection, then, we must have—and not only selection, but discrimination. Is the library assistant taught to discriminate, we may ask ourselves, and if not, why should his guess necessarily be any better than that of the reader he is supposed to advise? Can the blind lead the blind?

If the answer to such questions is in the negative, we must look for a remedy. Painstaking assimilation of the views of others as to the respective merits of individual authors and books is but scratching the surface of the problem: we must have librarians, or would-be librarians, who are so trained that they can unerringly pick out the true and reject the false. Otherwise they are only book issuers, or, as Mr. McColvin would call them, non-professional grade.

If any would demur that this smacks too much of idealism and is remote from actuality, it can only be pointed out that unless the foundation is sound, all the gilt and glitter in the world will not impose upon a person of susceptibility and refinement, and that unless we satisfy these we cannot hope to lead the ignorant. After the war we may expect a swamping of the still small voice by the loud and obvious, I think,

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and unless we are prepared we shall be swept away, in a literary sense, by plausible spinners of words.

To conclude, I will quote some words of R. H. Tawney; words which sum up my argument very cogently:

"The condition of recognising genuine superiority is a contempt for unfounded pretensions to it."

Such recognition comes more easily to some than others, but it can be taught to all. Examinations inhibit its appearance in the school curriculum, but surely it should hold first place in the education of librarians and all who realise the distinction between (in the words of F. R. Leavis) "what is done for the sake of getting through examinations and what is done because, in terms of an intelligent notion of what in the modern world an educated person should be, it is clearly worth doing."

## Libraries and the Youth Service<sup>1</sup>

J. G. Birkett

CIVILISATION at the cross roads was the title of a book written by Figgis before the last war, and now, thirty years later, the title appears to be very apt as a description of the present state of society. Never before in the history of mankind has there been such a chaos of thought or such a divergence of opinion about the purpose of life and the organisation of society.

We are now living in a transitional period—we still stand at the cross roads—and I have no doubt that reading, that books and libraries are going to play an important part in deciding the direction that we shall take in the future, and the speed with which we shall move off. Moreover, the reading of young people is going to be just as important as that of adults. But the printed word, if it is not governed by clear thinking like the Cinema or the Wireless, can be a powerful instrument for evil as well as for good. There is still a deal of truth in the saying that "the views of the majority are to-day decided by Lord Beaverbrook and by Hollywood."

The education of boys and girls has failed in the past to fulfil two of its main functions: first, to furnish the necessary implements without which there can be no further education (that is, the three R's), and, second, to create the mental habit which will enable those possessing the instruments to use them for themselves. In the introduction to one of her books, Dorothy Sayers states the case rather delightfully.

"The education that we have so far succeeded in giving to the bulk of our citizens has produced a system of mental slatterns. They are literate only in the formal sense that they are capable of putting the symbols C A T together to produce the word 'cat.' But they are not literate in the sense of deriving from those letters any clear mental concept of the animal. Literacy in this form is dangerous, since it lays the mind open to any mischievous nonsense about cats that an irresponsible writer may choose to print, nonsense which could never have entered the heads of plain illiterates who are familiar with an actual cat even if unable to spell its name."

It is not surprising, therefore, that we find men like Lord David Cecil urging that people should, above all, be taught to think for themselves and develop independent

<sup>1</sup> A paper given by the County Youth Organiser, Nottinghamshire, at an East Midland Divisional meeting.

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minds. Adolescence is a period when boys and girls can well be taught to develop their critical faculties, and then be immunised from mere emotional propaganda, and in this work the right choice of books and sound direction in reading is of the greater importance. That is where libraries and librarians come in. *Reading should be directed towards encouraging the development of critical faculties.*

Although in Youth Service we are particularly concerned with the 14 to 20 age-group, it should be clearly understood that we do not consider that education should be confined to the "under-twenties." Adult education is just as important as pre-adult education, for there are many subjects that cannot be properly taught until maturity has been reached and life has been experienced. The 14 to 20 period is not, therefore, so much a period of training for adult life as part of a continuous educational process, during which that interest which will insist on further search for knowledge should be stimulated. *Reading should therefore be designed to stimulate further interest and further reading.*

You will not find that all club leaders are interested in introducing books into their clubs, although I should like to be able to tell you that they were. This is, in part, due to the fact that some leaders have never done much reading, and do not appreciate its value, and it is partly because some leaders have an idea that librarians live in a world of their own and know nothing about books which are not "high brow." In the case of club leaders who do not read themselves, I do not think that you should necessarily consider that the door is closed. Their indifference may well be due to the fact that they do not feel that they have sufficient knowledge to cope with a club library themselves, but it is quite likely that they might be only too glad to introduce books into their clubs if they could get someone to help them. *I suggest that you should offer to help to run club libraries.*

I think that there may be some grounds for the second of my reasons. It is axiomatic in youth work that if you are going to influence a boy or girl and are going to make them go in a certain direction, you must start out with them along the road that they are travelling, and continue with them until such time as you have gained their confidence. It is no good starting out in the direction in which you want them to go and expecting them to follow you, and it is no good simply telling them where they ought to go. If you prefer the expression, "you have got to start at their level." I know that some club leaders do not discuss films with their members, because they say that they are such trash. They may be, but I sometimes suspect that the real reason is that the leader has not got sufficient knowledge of the films or the film-stars to make intelligent criticisms of them. I suggest that the same thing may be true of books. If you have not a working knowledge of the books that most young people do read—and you may call them trash—you are not in a position to discuss them, and you have no starting-point from which you can lead on to more intelligent and more profitable reading. *Reading must continue from the point that the club member has already reached.*

Youth is so often charged with being inconsistent. We are told that "they don't stay the course," "they start on one thing, and in a few weeks' time they want to change to something else." This is true, but I contend that, within certain limits, it is right. Adolescence is the period during which young people find themselves and establish their independence as persons. They are living at a very high potential; they are naturally inquisitive; they want to experiment and to look round before their personalities crystallise out; and I believe it is right that they should do so. You must not, therefore, expect them to follow a continuous and logical course of study at this age, because if you do, you will be disappointed. Be prepared to help them with their momentary interests, for at any time one of these passing passions may become permanent. This requires infinite patience, but it is not time wasted. It is well to

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remember that few teachers see the full results of their labours, but, just because you cannot see the plant grow, it does not mean that it is not worth while planting the seed.

Finally, there is the question of publicity and propaganda to be considered. Unfortunately, the library service, like so much local government work, is based on an administrative tradition which, until quite recently, has frowned on any form of publicity. Fortunately, the work of many government departments, such as the Ministries of Food and Information, have shown, as a result of this war, that even Civil Servants can indulge in propaganda and still remain "respectable."

The Library Service, like the Education Service, needs publicity, for surely if it has something good to offer, something of value to the community, it should be made widely known as possible, and we should do all we can to make people sample it.

The day may not yet have arrived when public libraries can take a stall in the public market and display their wares where people congregate, but there is much that can be done in the meantime, particularly through Youth Organisations. But, you must be prepared to go to them ; it is no good waiting for them to come to you. Youth Service is new, and affords a grand opportunity for experiment and the introduction of new methods. There is no reason why you should not use it as the thin edge of the wedge and establish precedents which you can put to good use in other fields later on.

I believe that there are still some libraries that could learn from the club notice board which displays the poster "*The Scarlet Pimpernel* is at the Ritz this week. Have you read the sequel ? If not, we have a copy to lend you !" That type of advertising is effective with Youth. Libraries could well obtain advance programmes from the local cinemas, and use them as the basis of their advertising, for all young people go to the cinema.

I heard recently of an experiment carried out in Paris which proved very successful. Boys and girls were invited to the library, and when they were seated, two Frenchmen immaculately dressed and carrying two or three brand new books, came in and met as though "by chance" in front of the children. The first remarked that he hadn't got to bed until two o'clock that morning because he had been so thrilled with the book he had been reading, and proceeded to read short extracts to his friend, who replied with comments on the books that he was carrying. After ten minutes they both walked out, leaving, again "by chance," the books behind them, their exit being followed by a rush by the children to look at the books. The underlying principle of this action—the discussion by adults, rather than discussion for the benefit of young people—might well be used in club work.

I do not know if your association have made films for advertising reading and books. If not, then I suggest that a short instructional film that could be shown in clubs or cinemas would do much to popularise reading by young people, and could be designed to encourage the reading of books worth reading.

May I emphasise, in conclusion, that the need for discriminate reading by young people is very great at the present time ; that it is your job, as librarians, to see that it takes place ; and that it can only be achieved if libraries adopt a really dynamic policy.

## Students' Problems

### THE MAY EXAMINATIONS

#### ELEMENTARY

Ernest Wisker

##### First Paper—Elementary Literary History

Six questions are to be attempted ; seven of the nine given could be answered without any knowledge of English literature before the Victorian age, and of these seven, six could be answered by a good acquaintance with the novelists alone of the Victorian and contemporary scenes.

Question 6 asks reasons for the appeal of any Victorian novelist, and a description of one character each from two of the novels. Question 5 is a 300-word essay on either Jane Austen, George Eliot, Conrad, Masefield, John Drinkwater or Hardy. Drinkwater seems strangely out of place in this eminent company. The Poet Laureate, after appearing in Question 5, has Question 4 all to himself—"Who is the Poet Laureate ? Name two of his works and describe one of them." The labour-saving student, who did Masefield in Question 5, could copy out his answer with very slight alterations as the answer to Question 4. More labour-saving is possible in Questions 2 and 8. Question 2 is on any contemporary author, reasons for appeal, and a short summary of one of the books. This short summary could be expanded to satisfy Question 8—"Describe any English book, published since 1920, which you have read and enjoyed." I know of one student who produced *The Citadel* in response to this, and on the wording of the question, any best-seller since 1920, whether possessing literary merit or not, would fill the bill. Surely a better wording would be "Describe any work by either (a) (group of named modern novelists) ; (b) (group of named modern dramatists) ; (c) (group of named modern poets) which you have read and enjoyed."

Question 9, asking for a summary of either *The merchant of Venice*, *David Copperfield*, *Adam Bede*, *Ivanhoe*, *Cranford*, or *The vicar of Wakefield*, shows again that Victorian plus novelist complex—five out of the six are novels, and three of the six are Victorians.

The remaining questions are of the easy "who wrote what ?" breed. Question 1 gives ten mixed standard authors in alphabetical order to be put into chronological order (from Shakespeare to Trollope), one work by each to be given. Question 7 asks only for the names of two works by Trollope, Shaw, Priestley, Wells, Ruskin. Question 3 is "Who wrote the following ?"—ten straightforward titles, the latest publication being *The good companions*. All questions in this paper carry equal marks, and Question 3 and Question 7 are far too easy even for this elementary examination. This type of question is inevitable in a paper set to a syllabus calling for "outline knowledge," and deliberately eschewing knowledge of the works of literature themselves, but even so, these tests could be made more exacting, more worthy to stand with other questions in mark value, and could more nearly occupy the half an hour average time-limit for questions. The number of titles in "Who wrote the following ?" could be increased to thirty, covering all the periods of English literature, and the question could still be answered comfortably in half an hour. Instead of "Name two works by—" why not, for example, "Name two dramatists, two essayists, two poets who were writing in (a) the eighteenth century ; (b) the nineteenth century ;

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and (c) who are writing now"? This type of question still calls for "outline knowledge" only, but gives more opportunity for the intelligent assistant with initiative, and is not such a humdrum present to the unenterprising textbook-crammer.

In general, the paper is a gift; and a labour-saving utility model into the bargain—two questions may be satisfied by a knowledge of John Masefield, two more by a knowledge of one contemporary author, and the ration of six may be made up by a "Who wrote the following?" and a "Name two works by—" In fact, and better and better, if John Masefield has a special appeal to you as a contemporary author, four questions may be answered by knowledge of John Masefield alone.

It is silly to criticise anything for not being something other than it was meant to be, and it must be remembered that the examiners are limited by a syllabus which places emphasis on superficial "outline knowledge." Nevertheless, with all respect, I do criticise this paper because its questions are framed to encourage a permanent pre-occupation with standard fiction in both tutors and students, and does not encourage them to even an "outline" acquaintance with ancient and modern poets, playwrights, and essayists.

### Second Paper

This paper is a straightforward exposition of the examination syllabus, which asks for the elements of the Decimal Classification, general rules for classifying books, the author entry in cataloguing, accession methods, and shelf registers. The five questions ask for the mnemonic features of Dewey, topic and form classification, the kind of author catalogue used in one's own library the value of an accessions register, and six examples of author entry forms. Short, clear, descriptive answers, without padding, are required. It is difficult to imagine a simpler set of questions.

### Third Paper—Elementary Library Administration

A test of general alertness and interest in what is going on in the public library world, and in one's own library in particular. Question 2—an essay on one's own particular work—is more a test of expression than of anything else, and a glorious opportunity for the keen assistant. This question is easier for the assistant in the small library who will have more personal variety to talk about than his colleague in the large library; the latter, occupied in a narrower field, will need to relate his small part to the great machine in which he is a cog. Question 1, on the provision of books for the Services, calls for up-to-date knowledge on what one's own library is doing and on what other libraries are doing, the latter knowledge being gained from the reading of current professional periodicals, reports, and bulletins. Information on what non-public library agencies are doing would be in order here. Questions 4 and 5 are on the practices of one's own library. Question 5, on records of membership and on joining the library, is straightforward and easy, if the records are not only described but their purpose indicated. Question 4, on the methods of helping readers, gives a great advantage to the assistant from a system run in the Leyton and Rugby traditions, but is rather hard on the unfortunate from the still too common library system where practically nothing is done to help readers in their quest for books. The danger in this question is in concentrating on the more spectacular sides of reader aid, such as printed and personal guidance, and omitting the fundamental routine of cataloguing, classification and shelf guiding. The remaining question, "Are libraries really helping the war effort apart from providing light reading for tired workers?" calls for an outline of the function of the public library service in the community, a function which is as active in war-time as in peace-time, though its direction may not

## The Library Assistant

be the same. This is the most difficult question in this section, and the one with the most pitfalls, for a really useful, comprehensive, and balanced answer can come only from that wide experience of public library work, which the assistant sitting for his first examination will not possess. The inexperienced may here indulge in those sweeping generalisations indicative of superficial knowledge, which bring high blood pressure to examiners and low marks to candidates.

The general comment on the examination as a whole must be that which Mr. Walford pronounced on the December, 1942, papers—"an easy set of papers, with an occasional question for the student with initiative." To this I would add "no assistant of average intelligence and interest in the job with a year's experience in an average library should fail this examination."

### INTERMEDIATE

#### CLASSIFICATION

Stanley G. Saunders

After a night repeatedly disturbed by sirens, London candidates particularly must have experienced a feeling of relief when confronted with the theory paper on the morning of 17th May. A straightforward paper, containing no surprises, yet covering the whole gamut of the syllabus equitably.

Question 1. The expected question on the theory of natural and artificial classification, this time in the guise of "Correlation of properties." Although it must be admitted that this is a fundamental of the subject, its recurrence implies a doubt in the minds of the examiners regarding the soundness with which it is understood by candidates. Examples were essential to the efficient explanation of this question, a point which so many students seem to forget, or which they cannot, or will not, satisfy when writing exercises.

Question 2. Another typical question ; one demanding a knowledge of a particular recommended text—this time Richardson. While easily answered by candidates who remembered the substance of section B of part 6 of Richardson's second lecture, it was almost impossible of satisfaction if the candidate had been too lazy to master the idiosyncrasies of Richardson's tortuous style.

Question 3. A practical but legitimate question in the theory paper, on methodology. Candidates should have realised that this question dealt with the second process in practical classification, *i.e.* the principles guiding the classifier in placing a book in the scheme in use *after* the subject of the book has been determined. I imagine the examiners wanted to know how candidates would proceed to find the suitable place in the scheme, and what points regarding the book, and its potential readers, they would take into consideration in making a choice between two, or more, conflicting places. It is doubtful whether they were interested in being told to look at the title page, contents list, preface, etc., to discover what the book was about.

Question 4. This was a fresher question than most and concerned the advantages and disadvantages of alternative locations. The outstanding advantage of this principle is clearly the adaptability it gives to the scheme, and the latitude it gives the librarian using the scheme to make the classification a real aid to his readers. On the debit side rests the serious risk of confusion likely to arise from one of several causes ; inconsistency in using the alternative locations ; if carried too far the principle will effect

## The Library Assistant

classification of a hair-splitting temper likely to separate books needed together in use and finally lopsided classification can arise from personal bias in using these alternative locations.

Question 5. Concerned the theories of the Relative and Specific indexes, together with the opposed principles of organisation used as the foundations of the Decimal and Subject schemes. Why each compiler provided his scheme with the index of his choice is fully explained in the introductions to the schemes concerned. That a relative index could be successfully applied to the Subject scheme is proved so far as the existing index is in places already relative. On the other hand, the manner in which topics are scattered by aspect in Dewey makes the provision of an index tying up these aspects of subjects imperative.

Question 6. If bibliography is given its widest meaning this question emphasises the concluding remarks of the previous comment. The inconvenient way in which aspects of this subject are distributed is notorious. For an exhaustive examination of material on this topic a reader has to turn to 010, 020, 090, and 655, while none of these is correlated with the art of writing as expressed in literature.

Question 7. Followed on naturally from Questions 5 and 6. The more one uses Dewey the greater sympathy one has for Brown's principle of Categorical numbers—particularly if they could be systemised into a series of more compact tables, one for each main class, with a table for general application giving more scope than the common subdivisions of the Decimal classification.

Question 8. Was a purely descriptive question of Cutter's Local List. Owing to the scanty supply of the Expansive Classification in this country, most candidates, no doubt, had to rely on textbook information in answering this question.

Question 9. This seems to be the examiners' reaction to answers received to Question 8 (on Miss Kelly's theories) in the December, 1942, paper. The limit to the number of subjects contained in any book which are listed in the subject catalogue is dictated on the one hand by how much time and labour the library is able and/or willing to spend on analytical cataloguing ; on the other by how far the topics represented in the book can be separated as individual and worthwhile contributions to the knowledge of the subject.

*Practical.*—After the confidence in the sympathy of the examiners engendered by the morning paper candidates received an unpleasant jolt in the afternoon. The following places are suggested ; whether they would have received a pass mark their author will unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, never know !

A. 338.1. B. 658.3 or 823.91 ! C. 571. D. 351.823. E. 330.1. F. 330.942 or 942.02. G. 327.73. H. 157. I. 398.31. J. 010.1. K. 355. L. 010.9. M. 581.134. N. 630.1. O. 529.7. P. 338.1. Q. 331. 2544. R. 331.83. S. 321.04. T. 629.2  
(Classified by Dewey 12th ed.)

## CATALOGUING

L. M. Harrod

The theoretical paper held no terrors for candidates who had read fairly widely and prepared the subject reasonably well. Questions 2 and 6 dealt with the same broad subject (the kind of catalogue most suitable for certain types of user and library) and the answers must be largely opinion in which theory is influenced

## The Library Assistant

experience. Candidates whose experience is limited largely to lending libraries may have had some difficulty in dealing with Question 1 (the catalogue has become a bibliography) : many assistants know little of bibliographies until after they have passed the Intermediate examination. Question 3 (outline history of the card catalogue) could be only satisfactorily answered by those who had studied Sayers and Stewarts, *The Card Catalogue*. One question only (No. 4) on the Anglo-American Code is small measure : a sound knowledge of the Code should be the basis of this examination. Question 5 (points to be specially noted when annotating books on (a) political economy ; (b) military history ; (c) music) gives opportunity for the exercise of common sense and application of the general principles of annotation. The extent to which music is annotated depends largely on the fullness of the cataloguing which should be as full as possible. Very little annotation should be required for properly catalogued music. The 1908 edition of the Code treats music most inadequately, but the revised edition is more satisfactory in this respect. Question 9 (give subject headings) is a stand-by question for which every candidate should prepare throughout his studies. The title *Single-handed Mother* does not give an indication of subject matter of the book ; if the candidate guessed that it dealt with pre-natal hygiene and the feeding, care and early training of babies he would have been lucky !

The practical paper involved hard writing and quick thinking if it was to be completed in the time allowed. It was a very fair test of candidates' grasp of practical cataloguing and of the Anglo-American and Cutter rules, but it meant they had to keep their wits about them. None of the books presented difficulties in the selection of suitable subject headings. *The American Year Book* needs no reference under the Supervisory Board representing the National Learned Societies. The statement in the note that William Chaffers' *Handbook* was first published in 1897 gives the correct name for the main author entry : Chaffers, (William). " *Memoirs of the Geological Survey . . .*" goes under Geological Survey in accordance with A.-A. rule 59. Jeremiah Ben-Jacob (No. 4) is treated as an ordinary compound name. No. 5 tests the use of the rule covering noblemen which knowledge is also tested in the theoretical paper (Question 4). The code does not indicate whether books such as *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, published under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs should go under the author or the Society. The candidate can only do what he thinks best and add a note pointing this out and giving reasons for his decisions. The revised code makes this problem clearer and states that such publications, unless of a general routine character, should be entered under the personal author even though they are issued by the Society. *Stories from Shakespeare* goes under Davis, Samuel, and *Studies in History and Religion* under Robinson, H. Wheeler with analytics for the contributions mentioned in the Contents note and—most important—*—bibl.* in the annotation. Rule 143 applies to *War and the psychological conditions of peace*, i.e. entry under this title with mention of the earlier title in a note, and a reference from the earlier title.

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### Current Books: War and Postwar

JOHN ARMITAGE, Editor. *Europe in bondage*. Lindsay Drummond. 6s.

This, the last volume of a series of eleven, summarises the situation in occupied Europe as it stands to-day. Facts are given showing the spoliation under the Nazi regime, and the terrorism and financial gangsterism used to gain complete economic domination over each country. The book also describes how resistance is strengthening in each country and the failure of Hitler's attempt at a New Order.

SIR WILLIAM BEVERIDGE. *Pillars of security*. Allen and Unwin. 6s.

The great report itself is stiff reading for the plain man. Here, in a series of essays and addresses, Sir William gives us the essentials of his scheme to destroy the giant of Want and Idleness, and outlines the programme required to kill Disease, Ignorance and Squalor. Objections raised to the security plan are countered and dispelled, and we see the possibilities of the Beveridge plan set out with skill, logic and fervour. A book for everyone interested in the future of Britain.

W. K. HANCOCK. *Argument of empire*. Penguin Books. 9d.

Impossible perhaps to survey and attempt to solve the problems of the British Empire in a book of 150 pages. Mr. Hancock has outlined these problems, however, and his last three chapters on the targets of welfare, freedom and peace do at any rate go some distance in suggestion of a solution. The author, professor of history at Birmingham University, knows his subject and writes about it in a clear colloquial style, without pomposity and without the usual terrifying apparatus of notes. An admirable little survey.

CHARLES MADGE. *War-time pattern of saving and spending*. C.U.P. 6s.

(National Institute of Economic and Social Research : Occasional papers IV.)

This exceedingly well-documented survey is a result of researches made among working-class populations in Glasgow, Bristol and Leeds. It was assumed that high saving in war-time would seem to be a preparation for a redistribution of wealth; the conclusion reached from the survey is that "high savers are in a minority, the permanent effects of war in terms of the redistribution of wealth may therefore affect only a few." The survey is not merely a mass of figures and tables, but contains many interesting case histories, is a valuable insight into life in war-time, and should be of interest both to the student and the general reader.

R.I.B.A. *Rebuilding Britain*. Lund Humphries. 3s. 6d.

This and the other handbook reviewed below are the outcome of the recent exhibition held at the National Gallery. The lesson we are taught is that planning should not be left to private initiative, but to the professional architect and town planner that towns should not grow up and swallow the countryside, but that both should be planned together as a whole, one supplementing the other. Plans, photographs and warning examples show us the best (and worst) of the past and present. A book for all libraries to circulate freely.

## The Library Assistant

*Towards a new Britain.* Architectural Press. 1s. 6d.

This admirably printed little book gives us a glimpse of the brave new cities that may rise in Britain after the war. Text diagrams and pictures are planned as a whole : the elements of town planning lead to a consideration of model schemes from Ebenezer Howard to Le Corbusier : the modern technique and style are contrasted with the best of previous centuries. Simple, direct, logical, this is a compact introduction to a vast subject.

## Correspondence

County Branch Library,  
Bromsgrove.

The Editor,

*The Library Assistant.*

Sir,—

In reply to Mr. Lamb's restrictions on Mr. Cowley's remarks in *The Link*— Apart from the undoubted fact that there are still far too many authorities (unlike Sheffield) prejudiced against graduates, how can we expect many university student, (whose education has usually been expensive) to contemplate public librarianships as a career, with its (too often) ludicrous remuneration, poor prospects and feeble status *vis-à-vis* other professions.

Yet, if degrees are considered desirable in other professions surely they are all the more important for public librarians, for the following reason : At a university, one has the advantage of meeting very many people, highly educated in a great variety of subjects. The knowledge thus acquired (even if only superficial) can obviously be of great value in a public library, where no subjects are barred.

In reply to this, it might be said that "all a librarian needs is a knowledge of books and people" (and library technique), but I am suggesting that a librarian who knows, for example, what Palaeontology or Surrealism is, or who Sun-Yat-Sen or Leeuwenhoeck were, has a great advantage, in saving of time and in "impressing" and gaining the respect of the reader, over the librarian who has to look these matters up. I know all about the importance of the "technics" of librarianship, but it does seem to me that the majority of public librarians should be at least as well educated as secondary school teachers. Yet a teacher without a degree is a rare occurrence in a good secondary school and, incidentally, a teacher with a training-college certificate is deemed to have an added advantage (*cf.* the School of Librarianship ; what we want are more schools of librarianship—attached to universities).

Yours faithfully,

J. G. CHOPE  
(Branch Librarian).

## The Library Assistant

The Editor,

*The Library Assistant.*

Sir,—

Mr. Musket, in a recent issue of *The Library Assistant*, is pleased to be facetious at the expense of King's Regulations for the Royal Air Force. I suppose I bear about as much affection for that publication as any member of the Service, but in justice to its unsung author I would remind Mr. Musket that :

- (a) The maintenance of station libraries is not—let us admit it—one of the most important objects of the combatant Services ;
- (b) The size of the station library is seldom sufficient to warrant the use of a professional classification system ; and
- (c) The qualifications of the station librarian—if any—are seldom such as to enable him to employ such a system.

In conclusion, had the power and prestige of the Library Association, through the more united efforts of its members and leaders, attained a more influential place for the profession in the world before the war, librarians both in and out of the Services might be in a more favourable position to affect the education of the fighting man to-day.

Yours faithfully,

H. J. MEDD, R.A.F. (Canada).

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